ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A telecommunications network has first and second entities (20_1 and 20_2) which communicate by sending a packet (22) having a compressed header (24'). A header compression key (23) is associated with (e.g., included in) the packet. The header compression key has a first field (23A) which, in a first mode of the invention, is utilized exclusively for distinguishing between different flows of compressed packets (CIDs). In a second mode of the invention, the first field (23A) of the header compression key can be utilized either for distinguishing between the different flows of compressed packets or for distinguishing between different header compression identifiers. Whether the first field of the header compression key is employed exclusively for distinguishing between different flows of compressed packets (the first mode) or can also be employed for distinguishing between different header compression identifiers (second mode) depends on a value in a second field (23B) of the header compression key. In the second mode, a first subset of values for the first field of the header compression key is employed to distinguish between different header compression identifiers, while a second subset of values for the first field is employed to distinguish between the different flows of compressed packets.